

The Augusta Pulse

For the employees and friends of the Augusta VA Medical Center

Summer 2005



This Issue

**Active Duty
Rehabilitation
Unit's One Year
Anniversary**

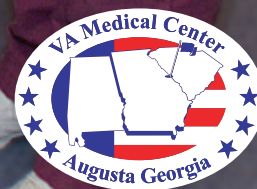
Cardiac Cath Lab

**Salute to
Employees**

Mail Call

Special Events

***Augusta VAMC's Cardiac Catheterization Lab
is certainly state of the art, but it's the outstanding
team that makes it so successful.***





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The Augusta VA Pulse
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ON THE COVER:
Cath Lab Team Members
Jan Viehman, Dr. Mahendra Mandawat,
Brenda Corley, Mary Burden

Director's Message



It has been an aspiration of mine for quite some time to have a quarterly news magazine focusing on current topics of interest, new initiatives and to highlight the talented staff that makes up the Augusta VA Medical Center. This publication is intended for the employees, volunteers, and stakeholders who invest their time, talents and energy to ensure the success of our mission: "To do everything we can for veterans."

In today's health care market there are many challenges facing medical facilities. However, the resolve and tenacity of the staff to provide the best care possible and remain adaptable in facing these challenges has become a hallmark of the Augusta VA Medical Center. After taking a look at this first publication effort, it is already apparent that there are many accomplishments to brag about and an abundance of good news to share. I look forward to upcoming issues which will continue to feature clinical highlights, outstanding staff, special visitors and much more. Let us know if there are topics you would like to see included and any other comments or suggestions you may have.

It is my hope that you will find this magazine informative and educational, but most of all, it is my goal to increase awareness and promote the excellent programs and care provided by an exceptional staff.

James F. Trusley III
Director, Augusta VA Medical Center



Downtown Division



Uptown Division



From left to right: Dr. Thomas Kiernan, Chief of Staff; Ralph R. Angelo, Associate Director; Joyce Coleman, Acting Associate Director for Nursing/Patient Services; Dr. Carter Mecher, Chief Medical Officer VA Southeast Network 7; James F. Trusley III, Director, Augusta VA Medical Center; Dr. Rose Trinchler, Service Line Executive, Spinal Cord Injury Unit; Dr. Dennis Hollins, Medical Director, Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit; and Brigadier General Eric Schoomaker, Commanding General for the Southeast Regional Medical Command.

A One Year Anniversary Celebration was held on May 31, 2005, to commemorate the opening of the U. S. Army Southeast Regional Medical Command and VA Southeast Network Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit. This unique collaborative program between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs was established to provide comprehensive inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation services for armed forces personnel; and has also proven to be an important referral resource for military treatment facilities and VA Medical Centers nationwide. Since the inception of the unit, over 160 military service personnel have received care, with more than 40 of them able to return to active duty.

This success is the direct result of the team spirit between health care professions, both military and civilian,

dedicated to providing exceptional care and outstanding rehabilitation opportunities.

This Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit was designed around the private sector model for acute rehabilitation services. Comprehensive services include internal medicine, psychiatry, nursing, social work (case managers), psychology, nutrition, speech pathology and occupational and physical therapy. All staff on the unit were hired specifically to meet the rehabilitative needs of the younger active duty personnel.

There has been an outpouring of support from veteran service organizations, and special visitors to the unit including Senator Saxby Chambliss, U.S. Army Surgeon General, Lt. General Kevin C. Kiley, and Deputy Under Secretary, Dr. Michael Kussman.



Augusta's Cardiac Cath Lab . . .

More

Under the clinical leadership of Dr. Mahendra Mandawat, Chief, Cardiovascular Care Department, and the nursing oversight of Rose Cowden Wright, RN, MSN, the Augusta VAMC Cardiac Catheterization and Diagnostic Lab (cath lab) is one of the most versatile and technologically advanced labs of its kind. With a staff of six, two cath lab technologists, one registered nurse, and three cardiac physicians, specializing in diagnostics and interventions, the cath lab is on the forefront of utilizing the most advanced technologies in flat plate digital imaging and information technology. The utilization of these advanced technologies gives veterans access to the best diagnostic and interventional tools available. These new technologies are also much safer for the patient because they are capable of reducing radiation exposure by as much as 50 percent. According to Jan Veihman, cath lab nurse, the cath lab is like a "one stop shop" where patients can receive both intervention and diagnostics all in one, which is a testament to the lab's highly skilled staff. Another example of the staff's skill and expertise can be found in the complication rate, one of the lowest rates of any lab performing this variety of complex procedures.

The advanced cardiac procedures performed in the lab include coronary angiography, balloon angioplasty, simple and complex percutaneous coronary interventions, cardiac electrophysiology studies, radio frequency ablation, and cardiac pacemaker insertion, among others. The Augusta VAMC lab also utilizes drug-eluting stents, and became the first cath lab within VISN 7 to employ the new technology. (A drug-eluting stent is a hollow device that holds a coronary artery open after it has been opened with the use of a balloon on a catheter, and then continuously releases a medication to keep clots from forming within the stent following the procedure.) If a balloon is unable to go through an artery, the lab can perform a rotational atherectomy procedure, which uses a drill inside the artery to cut away and remove the build-up. In addition, the lab has a cardiac defibrillator implantation program for complex heart rhythm cases as well as pacemaker, cardiac defibrillator and cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) programs for patients with advanced heart failure. As a result of the variety of services offered, the case load per month has increased dramatically from 40-50 cases to 70-90 cases since the inception of the new lab in late 2004. The lab also sees many referrals, approximately 30 percent, from surrounding VA medical centers within VISN 7.

One notable example of the cath lab's "cutting edge" stature involves utilizing a new standard model data entry system called CART-CL, otherwise known as the Cardiac Assessment Report Template for cath labs. The Augusta VAMC cath lab is a national beta test site for this unique data

entry system, which is designed to communicate with the computerized patient record system (CPRS). This system was developed for VA by John Rumsfeld, a physician in Colorado. This new data entry system will allow users to track procedure numbers, access pre-cath notes, pre-op notes and procedure reports. The main advantage to the system is that it saves time by not having to develop files, thereby speeding up the turnaround time for the patient. In fact, it saves approximately 30 to 45 minutes in documentation time by the providers, which has invariably improved patient satisfaction by reducing time between cases and making the cath lab available in a more timely manner for the next patient. If the trial period is deemed successful, the data entry system will be utilized on a grander scale culminating in a national database for use among VA cath labs throughout the country.

In keeping with the medical center's dedication to providing educational opportunities to physicians-in-training, the cardiac cath lab plays an integral role in cardiology fellowship training. In affiliation with the Medical College of Georgia, three cardiologists are trained every year in the lab, many of whom stay in the Augusta community to practice cardiology.

There are additional training and observation opportunities for other affiliations such as cath lab tech students, radiology tech students, and LPN and RN students.

The cath procedure is the bulk of the patient load seen in the Augusta VAMC cath lab with approximately four to five cath procedures completed per day. Cardiac catheterization is a minimally invasive, non-surgical procedure used to diagnose and treat coronary artery disease as well as diagnose and treat irregularities of the heart's electrical system. In fact, patients are awake during the procedure. Sedation may be provided for the patient to assist him/her for comfort during the procedure, with the goal being for the patient to be relaxed but able to understand and respond to physicians



Than Just State Of The Art



during the procedure. The test can measure blood pressure within the heart and how much oxygen is in the blood. It is also used to gain information about the pumping ability of the heart muscle. Throughout the procedure, the cardiologist and RN constantly monitor the patient's heart pressures and EKG. X-ray video images obtained during the injection of the contrast are viewed on a second monitor. Also during the procedure, the cath lab techs are assisting the physician in proper positioning of the patient and imaging equipment; and assuring that all images and other patient physiological data is recorded. Following the procedure, the patient is observed in one of the several areas where post-procedure care is delivered, including the Ambulatory Surgery Unit, the Coronary Care Unit, or the Progressive Care area. Some patients are even able to be discharged home within hours of completion of the procedure. Although cardiac catheterization is a highly specialized diagnostic technique, it is an extremely common procedure. Interestingly enough, across the United States, nearly one million cardiac catheterizations are performed each year. When done electively, the complication rate is low.

As for Jan Veihman, RN, working in the cath lab has been challenging and rewarding. In fact, his enthusiasm for working in the cath lab is evident since his VA career spans almost 20 years.

He attributes the satisfaction that he has experienced to the character of the highly skilled team of professionals that he works with and the autonomy the job provides.

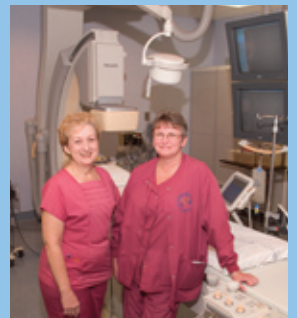
Many of the staff that work in the lab have been with the VA for a large part of their careers, which has created a close working team environment with individuals that have great respect and admiration for each other. Mary Burden and Brenda Corley, both lab technologists, have worked together in VA for 28 years and are an integral part of the cath lab team. An additional member of the team, Terri Raines, RN, MSN, is the pacemaker nurse. Ms Raines works with the patients, physicians and cath lab staff during the insertion of pacemakers and implanted defibrillators. Ms. Raines also provides pre- and post-procedure education for the patients and their families.

According to Dr. Mandawat, the future of the lab is full of new and exciting possibilities. For instance, there is currently a discussion going on about opening a second cath lab suite due to the increase in the patient workload and the high demand for quality cath lab services. As Chief of the Cardiovascular Care Department, Dr. Mandawat has a vision that includes a long term goal of becoming a VA Cardiology Center of Excellence. Under his leadership, the lab will continue to grow and expand its services all in an effort to strive for medical excellence in providing quality care to our nation's veterans.

Cath Lab Sisters . . .

Brenda Corley and Mary Burden, cath lab technologists, are affectionately known as the "sisters of the cath lab." This dynamic duo has worked together for the past 28 years and claim they have raised their children, buried loved ones and shared life experiences just like sisters.

Both will quickly tell you that when they are working, serving veterans is the top priority. Reflecting back on her early years, Mrs. Corley remembers there were basically three plans of treatment, "we could treat the patient with medical therapy, send them for open heart surgery, or send them home with their families to live out their lives as the disease was too far advanced to treat successfully." Both lab technicians become animated when discussing the outstanding cardiologists they have worked with. They have witnessed vast improvements in technology as cardiology has evolved into the exciting field of medicine that it is today.



Employee of the Year

Richard S. Boggan, Program Specialist, Primary Care, was named the 2005 Augusta VA Employee of the Year. Mr. Boggan's duties include coordinating the facility's Primary Care Management Module (PCMM) database, maintaining the facility's Electronic Wait List and facilitating programs and activities within the Primary Care Service Line. He is the in-house expert on the VA scheduling package which is used to schedule all of our patient's appointments. Mr. Boggan's outstanding customer service spills over into his relationships with co-workers and others in the medical center. He promotes relationships of trust and respect wherever he goes and conveys a positive personal image that allows the medical center to put its best foot forward with the veterans we serve and the community at large. He is multitasking, versatile and has the "can do" attitude necessary to assist with small and large projects successfully. Mr. Boggan has extraordinary planning skills which are crucial in managing the volume of patients seen in Primary Care. According to Primary Care Business Manager Kim Foss, "It is rare that we see the kind of initiative and conscientiousness that Richard consistently demonstrates on a daily basis." His resourcefulness, enthusiasm and team spirit are an asset to the Medical Center and bolster our mission to do everything we can for veterans.



Richard S. Boggan is a Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army National Guard and served in the Persian Gulf War and most recently in Afghanistan. When he dons his military attire, he is a recognized and proven leader in the U.S. Army Special Forces.

As the Augusta VA Employee of the Year, Mr. Boggan received a certificate of appreciation, a \$750 cash award and a designated parking space at the medical center for one year.

Outstanding Staff

Chaplain Joseph Lusk, D. Min., Chaplain Department Manager, received the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Chaplaincy. The award was presented in May, in Hampton, VA, during the Annual Chaplain's Leadership Convocation. This is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a VA Chaplain.

Jacqueline Perry, RN, Blind Rehabilitation Unit, was named the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Nurse of the Year, at the 8th Annual CSRA Spirit of Nursing Showcase on May 6. Other Augusta VAMC awards presented during this ceremony included: **Amber Brown,** VALOR student, named as the Student Nurse of the Year; and **Doris Smith, Mona Flanigan, Lisa Jones, Connie Lutz-Gambrel, Sandra Ludwikowski, Pamela Jones, Lovelia Reese, Cathy Neal** and **Sheila Siler** were all awarded the Spirit of Nursing and Commitment Award.

Wanda Sampson, RN, received the Nursing Excellence

Award of the Year, for the Augusta VA during Nurses Week in May.

Maurice "Moe" Terry, RN, Blind Rehabilitation Unit, was selected as the April Hero of the Month by the local TV station WRDW.

John Hofmeister, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Blind Rehabilitation Center, was awarded the Alpine Adaptive Ski Instructor Extraordinaire at the 19th Annual DAV/VA Winter Sports Clinic.

Kim Foss, Business Manager, Primary Care Service Line, was named "Columbia County Father of the Year." Kim was nominated by his daughter, Rachel.

Frank W. Ewald Jr., M.D., Pulmonary Department, was recognized as the "Teacher of the Year" by the Pulmonary and Critical Care Section Fellows from the Medical College of Georgia.

Awards & Recognition

Employee Of The Year Award 2005

Richard Boggan

Employee of the Month

Susan Folk – June

Symantha Reenders - July

Starr TRECC – Customer Service Award

Cynthia Woodard – May

Shelby J. Sperr – June

Earl Murray - July

Special Contribution Awards

The following employees have received Special Contribution Awards during the months of May, June and July.

Alice R. Beasley
Maribeth Bredehoft-Veidt
Charles Carter
Brian Catto
Latasha Cauley
Ellen Harbeson
Catherine Johnson
Luranie Johnson
Pamela D. Jones
Janice Kennedy
William A. Kingsberry
Joseph Korwin
Carlos Layne
Daniel Leschorn
Aaron Love
Sheila Manuel
Nanci McPhail
Diana Nance
Leonella Pickett
Wanda Sampson
Mary Sickman
Michael Spencer
Bennie Stephens
Farhad Talebi
Myra Taylor
Barbara Tiggs
Irma Westmoreland
Sherry Williams

The following employees have reached a special benchmark in their years of government service during the months of May, June and July.

45 Year Service Award:

Clarence E. Shell
Kenneth W. Lennox

35 Year Service Award:

Carolyn E. Daniel
Leonella M. Pickett
Emma W. Senter

30 Year Service Awards:

Frank D. Adgate
Linda P. Bannister
Linda S. Boyd
Wayne L. Carver
Queen E. Dobbs
Freddie L. Dunn
Bruce A. Grayson
Christine R. Jones
Susie A. Jones
Gary M. Lentz
Daniel B. Leverett
Elaine C. Scott
John M. Smith
Vernon C. Spaulding
Bennie J. Stephens
Frankie L. Tatum
Robert Turner

25 Year Service Awards:

Luis A. Alvarez
Russell E. Blanchard, Jr.
Gordon A. Brady
Susan B. Cooper
Nancy J. Cornell
William E. Curl
Wendy M. Davis
Connie I. Evans
Wayne F. Hadley
Benjamin H. Hamilton
Federico A. Hunt
Lucy M. Jackson
Mary E. Kinzler
Gail E. Lewis
Kenneth C. May
Carolyn Ann W. Odell
Wayne B. Partridge
Shirley A. Porter
Foster M. Reynolds
Denise L. Simms
Diane M. Taylor
Maybelle A. Tharrington
Gary D. Tom
Willie Washington, Jr.
Margo Wiggins-Lanier
Jimmie L. Wood
John T. Wynne, Jr.

20 Year Service Awards:

Cheryl B. Beasley
Denard Brown
Mae F. Bryant
Joyce M. Coleman
Bernadette E. Davis
Mary E. Dion
Rose M. Gillens
Denise A. Gray
Ivory L. Harrison
Butler Johnson
Bobby C. Jones, Jr.
Janet E. McCarty
Rene Nesbitt
Jean M. Newman
Forrest D. Roebuck
M K Robinson
Rosa M. Sanders
Lorene F. Scott
Deborah A. Veal
Ruth A. Weddell
James A. Whetzel

15 Year Service Awards:

Emmett A. Alvis
Iris A. Burns
Andrea C. Bussey
Martha S. Clem
Jacquelyn F. Curry
Anthony C. Epps
Lawrence J. Freant
Gerald Freeman
Christine A. Harris
Tom E. Harris
James M. Jarriel
Frederick N. Klippert
Angela Lawrence
Lula B. Lodge
Rhonda A. Mankin
Kimberly A. Marshall
Jeffrey W. May
Bettye L. McKinney
Laverne Mims
Randolph E. Morton
Valerie R. Peterson
Mary H. Powe
Jeannie L. Riddle
Sam R. Shannon
Donald Thompson
Haskell S. Whittington

10 Year Service Awards:

Marilyn H. Avery
Kimberly M. Borresen
Prentiss M. Broddie
Vasanti Deuskar
Priscilla R. Gresham
Rene J. Harper
Suzanne W. Kenrick
Priscilla Terry
Madeline White
Alfreda F. Williams

Mail Call !

Dear Mr. Trusley,

I am writing this letter to you to express my sincere appreciation for the professional care I received at the Dental Clinic. The efficiency, professionalism, and the work ethics of the dental staff were "par excellence". They functioned in a courteous mode. It is my expressed personal opinion that this group of Veterans Affairs staff are positive and productive assets to the VA Health Care system and our nation. These are the names of the Uptown Dental Clinic employees that I would like to acknowledge: Dr. Harry Parker, Sharon Brighton, Iris Burns, Kathy Fisher, and Cynthia Wilson. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter of appreciation of the caring professionals of the Uptown VA Dental Clinic.

Sincerely Yours,
RP

Dear Director,

Words cannot express the admiration I have for the help I have received since admittance. Although I have had my ups and downs (mostly because of me) I am now more aware of my PTSD and how to deal with it. I want to acknowledge a few of the staff and at the same time offer my appreciation for them. They are: Dr. Delecuona, Ruby Harbin, Susan Erickson, Carey Pickett, Lisa Waller, Dr. Albrecht, Kathleen Scott, Phyllis Pollard-Henley, Yteria Linney, and Dan Leverett. The PTSD staff, Incentive Therapy Program and Domiciliary were all very helpful.

Sincerely,
RH

Special Events Summer 2005

National Hospital Week
All Employee Picnic



Employee Appreciation
Ice Cream Social



Nurses Week
Traditional Dress Day



National Hospital Week
Softball Champions